

Starting Your Story

How do you start a piece of fiction? You can use the Five Facts of Fiction strategy to plan out very intricate and fascinating stories. But all the great ideas in the world won't help you if you can't write the first sentence. Often, even when writers have a thoroughly developed sense of their characters and plot, they don't quite know how to begin. I think this is because there are so many choices. Works of fiction begin in so many different ways. There are literally no rules, or even vague guidelines, regarding how best to go about it. Be that as it may, you can always take the position that beginning a work of fiction is no different than beginning any other type of writing. The same requirements apply: you still have to come up with something that will catch your readers' attention and make them want to read more. If you were to take this position, you would be essentially correct. Beginning one kind of writing is more or less like beginning any other. And so, you should feel free to use any of the lead strategies you've already learned. But what if you want to start with an approach that is uniquely suited to fiction? What if you want to learn some new lead strategies based on the information you just generated for your story through the Five Facts of Fiction? If so, read on. For each of the five facts, there's a specific lead strategy you can use to begin your piece.

A character beginning. In this beginning, based on Fact of Fiction #1, you start out with a detailed description of your main character. This is a very common type of beginning, one you've probably read more times than you can count.

A motivation beginning. Sometimes it's interesting to start by describing what your character wants. This allows you to set up the conflict in the story right away. This can be attractive to your readers because it gives them the essential information they need to understand what your story will be about.

A plot beginning. How can you start out your story by telling your readers the plot? Well, you can't. But you can use the plot to create a classic type of fiction beginning using a technique called "foreshadowing." To foreshadow something is to give a hint of what is to come. You can often entice your readers into reading on by giving them just a peak at how things will turn out in the end without giving it all away.

A "change" beginning. You obviously can't show the change your character is going to go through right at the beginning. That wouldn't make much sense even as foreshadowing. But you can describe your character's personality in such a way that when your readers reach the end, they see the stark contrast between the way your character ended up and the way he or she started out.

A "world" beginning. Another very common beginning involves describing the setting or the world where the story takes place. This is also one of the easiest beginnings to write.